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AN OBSERVATION CONCERNING THE VALIDITY OF COOT BROOD COUNTS

BY GORDON W. GULLION

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Gordon W. Gullion

Nevada Fish and Game Commission, Elko

The recent interest in productivity studies of the American Coot (*Fulica americana*) (cf. Kiel and Hawkins, Trans. N. Amer. Wildl. Conf., 18:311-322, 1953; Hunt and Naylor, Calif. Fish and Game,

41:295-314, 1955) make a note of caution imperative concerning the evaluation of nesting success and brood survival as determined by counts of broods less than three to four weeks old.

Table 1.—TWO STIMS OF BROOD COUNTS AT JEWEL LAKE, CONTRA COSTA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, IN 1949 (TOTAL NUMBER IMMATURES PLACED IN "NORTH BROOD," 6; IN "SOUTH BROOD," 7)

Date	North Brood With Without				South Brood With Without				Date	North Brood With Without				South Brood With Without			
	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀		♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀	♂	♀
April 30	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	May 21	—	1	5	—	—	—	—	—
May 1	—	—	—	8	—	—	—	—	May 28	3	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
May 1	—	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	May 28	—	—	—	2	5	—	—	—
May 6	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	June 1	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May 8 ^a	—	2	2	23	—	8	—	—	June 5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May 8	—	2	2	2	—	7	—	—	June 20	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
May 8	—	3	—	1	—	4	—	—	June 20	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—
May 11	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	June 20	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—
May 14	2	—	—	3	0	—	—	—	June 20	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—
May 14	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	June 21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May 14	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	June 21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May 14	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	June 23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May 14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	June 24	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
May 21	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	June 24	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—
May 21	—	2	—	—	—	0	—	—	June 26	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—
May 21	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	June 26	—	—	0	—	—	—	—	—
May 21	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	June 26	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May 21	—	2	2	1	—	—	—	—	July 13	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	—
May 21	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	July 2	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—

^aFirst north brood hatching.

^bFirst south brood hatching.

^cSecond north brood hatching—after that date it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between members of the two older broods.

The tendency of the parent coots to split up broods and to feed them in different parts of their territory generally precludes reliable counts of broods less than 25 days old. To obtain any degree of accuracy in counts of young broods, the observer must be familiar with coot territorial behavior and the limits of each territory concerned (cf. Gullion, Condor, 55:189-186, 1953). Both parents must be seen and a count made of the young with them. Even then the count for the first three weeks is likely to run under 70 per cent of actual brood size, as

shown in Table 1, and the chances are good that a complete count will never be obtained until the area is checked for several hours daily for a week or so. It was noted in studies in western California (Gullion, Ank, 71:391, 1954) that frequently several young coots may be left unattended in the safety of dense cover while the parents separately forage with one or two young in widely separated parts of their territory.

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